

Overcoming Sin and Temptation 3 (12/18/22 SS)

(study in JO Vol VI, Nature and Actings of Indwelling Sin (IS), Chapter 4-5)

Welcome to the third edition of our class on “Overcoming Sin & Temptation.”

Just by the title it is clear that this issue is relevant and important to any and all Christians regardless of age or level of understanding/maturity.

It is something we all deal with on a daily basis, moment by moment.

Basis (none exempt)

Our class is structured around the English Puritan John Owen’s treatment of temptation/mortification/IS {our focus for now}. Found in Vol 6 of his works.

I am not a fan of lengthy reviews, but I do want to sketch in very briefly where we have been just in case some of you are here for the first time.

In our first lesson we opened up the foundational text for the study (Rom. 7:21). {I find then the law... etc.} {Encourage to memorize}

That exposition introduced us to the reality of “conflict” in the Christian life. {Two balancing theological principles 1) Reigning/remaining sin. 2) Inaugurated exchatology (already/not yet)}

In our second lesson we considered the characteristics of the law of IS 1) Dominion, 2) In us (part of our being). And then we looked at its “seat and subject” WHICH IS?? Heart (mind, will, affections).

Now we come to our study for today:

Nature and Actings of IS

{“What it is (this week) & What it does (next week)}

I. Nature of IS (What it is)

There are perhaps a number of features that belong to the nature of sin that we could consider but I only want to focus on two.

Both flow from what we find in (Rom. 8:7).

Turn/read {NKJV} **1. Enmity/Hostile** (ESV/NASB)

Enmity: “The state or feeling of being actively opposed or hostile to someone.” {not a passing passion but a state of being}

In this case the mind “set on the flesh.” Fixed upon the flesh means the same as the mind fixed upon sin, which is presented in contradistinction to the spiritual mind in (vs 5-6) {we will come back to that}. For now let’s explore the nature of IS as enmity/hostility.

I think Owen is a great help to us in this explanation:

“It is not only an enemy, for so possibly some reconciliation of it unto might be made, but it is enmity itself, and so not capable of accepting any terms of peace! Enemies may be reconciled, but enmity cannot; yes the only way to reconcile enemies is to destroy the enmity.”

NOW WAIT A MINUTE.

I’m a Christian. “I walk according to the Spirit/set my mind on the things of the Spirit, which is life and peace” according to (Rom. 8:4-6). Does this really have application to me?? {expand}

Short answer: Yes and No.

NO, as it relates to your present relationship and future hope in the person and work of JC.

(Rom. 5:10) “For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.” {expand}

YES as it relates to the nature of sin.

Owen, “The smallest acting, the smallest and most imperceptible working of it, is the acting and working of enmity. Grace changes the nature of man, but nothing can change the nature of sin!! Whatever effect be wrought upon it, there is no effect wrought in it, but that it is enemy still, sin still.

That is our point – Sin is enmity/hostility to God and His ways. And to whatever degree sin remains in our flesh, to that degree it is set against God and all that is holy.

Our efforts, by the work and power of the HS, to fight against it, to cultivate the fruit of the Spirit over against the evidences of the flesh (Gal. 5) will affect its power and its influence in our lives. We will make headway against this enemy. But we will not, we cannot change its nature.

And therein lies its great powers!! Understanding that gives us insight into what Paul means in (Rom 7:16-17, 20) {Read/expand}

I think you get the point. {Critical to your growth, development, maturity, assurance}

Now, before we move on, I would like to point out one obvious matter, won't labor long on this. Don't want to be unnecessarily repetitive, but it's important.

Note the focus of this enmity as we see it in our text in (Rom. 8) {turn}

Follow the progression of the text with me (Read 8:5-8) {expand}.

The focus is God Himself, and all He has revealed about Himself and what He requires for those who will have a relationship with Him.

{Explain "Law of God" – Law, commandments, statutes, precepts, testimonies}

This enemy is universal, against all of God and the gospel of grace and universal to all He is doing in your soul as a result of His saving work {not just some things, but everything}.

Owen, "Enmity is universal to all of God as it is universal in all of the soul. Sin is enmity to God as God, and therefore to all of God, His goodness, holiness, mercy, grace, promises. There is not anything of Him which it does not oppose. When Christ comes with His spiritual power upon the soul, to conquer it to Himself, He has no quiet landing place. He can set foot on no ground but what He must fight for and conquer, whether the mind, will, affections, all is against Him.

"What can be of a more sad consideration than that we should carry about us constantly that which is enmity against God, and that not in this or that particulars, but in all that He is and in all wherein He hath revealed Himself."

So there you have it. IS is enmity/hostility to God, which is universal to all of God, and is universal in its effect upon our soul. {expand}

{Don't give up on me. I'll get you out of the "slough of despond" in due time.}

The second feature of sin's nature which flows out of the first {we will use Owen's archaic term}

2. Aversion – ask meaning? {aversion}

{Turning away, dislike, detestation, loathing. I have an aversion to/opposite of affection.}

Owen's point is simple. Sin, by nature, has an aversion to God and His ways. An aversion to all that is holy.

(Matt. 22:36f) "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?... You shall love the Lord your God, etc."

**But the shocking reality of the question of sin in the heart of man is that by nature we are "haters of God" (Rom. 1:30). "Hating one another" (Titus 3:3).

**And here again as it was with enmity/hostility, so it is with this aversion to God. To whatever degree that sin remains in any believer's heart, there lives this aversion/loathing/dislike of all that is holy. It is there by nature!

1. We find it in our affections.

The coldness/deadness/indifference to the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ and to His church and His people. We find ourselves going through the motions. But our hearts aren't in it!! Why? {expand}

It is this aversion to the things of God. (Rev. 2:4) "I have this against you, etc."
(Rev. 3:16) "Luke warm."

2. We find it in our minds.

We come to our Bibles to read/meditate.

We come to pray in the secret place/in the church.

We gather to worship with the people of God.

Our minds begin to wander in a multitude of directions {expand}. Unable to focus, frivolous thoughts and imaginations begin to drain our mental vitality!!

(Matt 15:8) "You hypocrites. Rightly did Isaiah prophecy "this people honors me with their lips."

Why? {expand}

It is this aversion to the things of God that belongs to the very nature of IS.

Now, if we're honest and transparent before God and one another we all agree that we have experienced these things to some degree or another, and these struggles can be quite dark.

What do we do? How do we respond to these realities?

*Owen gives us some pastoral counsel to help us, nothing new. {Just give you the headings and a few pithy quotes}

First: Pursue Holiness

“The great means to prevent the ??? of this enmity/aversation is the constant keeping of the soul in a universally holy frame!!”

“It is utterly impossible to keep the heart in a prevailing holy frame in any one duty, unless it be so in and unto all and every one. If sin ??? get hold in any one duty, they will put themselves upon the soul in everything. There is a ??? in obedience; break but one part and you interrupt the whole.”

(Ps. 119:6) “Then I shall not be ashamed, having my eyes fixed on all your commandments.” {Do not grow weary in well doing.}

Second: Labor to prevent it at its very beginnings.

(Mark 14:58) “Watch and pray that you enter not into temptation.”

With parables and warnings, one of the keynotes of our Lord’s ministry to his disciples was to be “watchful.” Peter learned it the hard way, but he learned it.

(1 Peter 5:8) “Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary, etc.”
{Yes, but he’s talking about the devil. Just as dangerous, is the enemy within my ???}

Third: Hold your ground against it.

Owen, “Though it does its worst, yet be sure it never prevails to a conquest. Opposition will arise, none so bitter and ??? as that from our own hearts. If we faint, we perish!!” “Yield not, then, unto it, but hold out the conflict; wait on God, and ye shall prevail.”

(Isaiah 40:31) “Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.”

Fourth: Walk humbly with God.

Owen, “After all the discoveries that God has made ??? Himself to us, all the kindness we have received from Him of doing us good and not evil in all things, there

should yet be such a heart of unkindness and unbelief still residing in us. The thought and consideration of it should cast us into the dust and bring us unto a humble walking with God.”

Fifth: Fill your mind with the beauty and excellency of things unseen and eternal.

Labor to fill your minds with thoughts of the eternal spring of all beauty, the Lord Jesus Christ {expand}. (Eph. 1:15f, Col. 1:15-20, Phil. 2:5-11, Heb 1:1-4)

Close – Brethren, it’s a narrow way that leads unto life. Stay in the middle. Don’t walk the edge. {expand}

{There will be progress as we grow and mature in our walking with God through Jesus Christ.}

A few questions. I would like answers. A little quiz to test your understanding.

1. Explain the difference between reigning/remaining sin as you understand it?
2. In the flesh/of the flesh distinction. Living for the flesh (sin). Living in the presence of sin, but not in sin (remaining).
3. How does Inaugurated Eschatology help us to understand our struggles with IS? (Rom 7:24-25) “Who will set us free, etc.”

John Murray Quote:

“The carnal mind or the mind set on the flesh includes not simply the activities of reason but also those of feeling and will, patterned after and controlled by the flesh.”

“(verse 7) Gives the reason why the mind set on the flesh is death. In is enmity (hostility) against God. It is the essence of sin to be against God. Sin is the contradiction of God.

“The implication being that the disposition underlying all its activity is one of opposition to and hatred of God.”